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INFO RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 6386  
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 6802  
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ NOV LIMA 2943  
RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA 8554  
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 3492  
RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL 3351  
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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 010992

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/23/2015

TAGS: [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [CO](#)

SUBJECT: ELN WARMING TO NEGOTIATION OPTIONS, FARC NOT MOVING

REF: BOGOTA 10889

Classified By: Charge Milton K. Drucker; reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: On November 21, ELN Spokesperson "Francisco Galan" announced that the ELN was ready to begin establishing peace talks with the Colombian government. Civil society guarantor Alejo Vargas reported optimism that the ELN could be successful in this negotiation effort. At the same time, the FARC has been reportedly hardening its position against negotiating terms of a prisoner swap. National Reconciliation Commission SYG Echeverri (strictly protect) declared the FARC to be increasingly rigid in its negotiation stance and said he doubted the latest GOC overture towards the FARC would be successful. End summary.

12. (U) On November 21, Gerardo Bermudez, a.k.a. "Francisco Galan," read a communique from the National Liberation Army (ELN) which approved establishing peace talks with the Colombian Government. Galan, accompanied by civil society guarantors, announced that the ELN planned to work towards a peace negotiation draft in consultations. Alejo Vargas, one of the civil society guarantors, expressed optimism that this effort would be successful despite a history of negotiation failures over the last five years. He said it was the first time the ELN was really being respected as a negotiating presence. As of November 22, neither the GOC nor ELN had set a date for a working meeting to discuss establishing peace talks.

13. (C) Although the ELN has displayed some flexibility in negotiating with the GOC with its message, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) remains entrenched. For example, the GOC offered the FARC international mediation to overcome the impasse surrounding hostage negotiations (reftel), but the FARC told Catholic Church interlocutors it would only accept a demilitarized zone for a trade. Given Colombia's one experience with the demilitarized zone established by President Pastrana, the GOC has repeatedly refused to demilitarize any section of Colombia, but has offered to consider other conditions. Also, the FARC continues to demand the release of 500 guerrillas in exchange for its 59 hostages. The GOC unilaterally released 23 guerrillas in December 2004 to demonstrate good faith. Following the decision of the Constitutional Court approving reelection, the FARC appears to be returning to the more difficult full exchange request.

14. (C) In a meeting with PolCouns on November 21, Secretary

General of the Church,s National Reconciliation Commission  
Father Dario Echeverri (strictly protect) reported that the  
FARC had said all GOC-initiated exchange proposals were  
doomed to failure. He said the FARC distrusts all  
interlocutors as pawns of GOC plans. Echeverri said the FARC  
was becoming more inflexible with time, although the FARC  
spokesperson told the Church representatives that elections  
were not a barrier to negotiation with the GOC despite its  
antipathy towards the Uribe Administration. The spokesperson  
claimed that the FARC wanted to realize an exchange and was  
only awaiting the GOC's agreement to a demilitarized zone.  
Although Echeverri promised that the Catholic Church would  
continue its mediation efforts between the GOC and FARC, he  
was pessimistic that there would be any movement.  
DRUCKER